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ATG Annual Report Survey

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ATG Annual Report Survey

by Mike Litchfield (College of Charleston) <libconf@cofc.edu>

The **Fourth ATG Annual Report Survey** focused on budgets, staffs, and electronic resources. Out of the 59 librarians who responded, 66% were academic and 25% were technical service librarians. The rest were special, reference, or public librarians. The average experience of respondents was 18.5 years.

e-Books and Electronic Resources

e-books are becoming more prevalent in libraries. 68% report that their library has bought e-books (last year the figure was 28%), and the average budget set aside for e-books is \$16,740. The largest budget reported was \$30,000, and the lowest fixed budget was \$2,911. A small number (5%) purchase e-books through consortia. Some (7%) report that they have no set budget for e-books. They include e-books with paper books in their budgets or purchase e-books solely on the recommendation of faculty. e-journals are another growing consideration for librarians. e-serials and electronic resources only account for 12% of overall budgets, but 53% of respondents have canceled paper subscriptions for electronic subscriptions. The cash value of cancelled paper subscriptions is \$22,156. Which is a perfect segue into—

Budgets

How have librarians' budgets changed over the past year? For 71% of respondents, the answer is "It's gone up." They're quick to qualify this however, by saying that the increase is to account for inflation. And indeed, the increase averages about 9%. 15% had stagnant budgets, while 14% lost money, to the tune of 16%. There were aberrations, to be sure. Some libraries saw an increase of 20% or more—one librarian reported a 50% increase! The aberrations went the other way as well—budgets for some librarians dropped by 36%.

When the budget was broken down into books, serials, and electronic resources, a definite pattern emerged. Those who reported an increase for books were fewer, only 54%, with 20% reporting budget cuts; the losses and increases averaged 9.5%, and the big gains were not as big as the overall budget, while the losses didn't get any prettier. Journals fared about the same. 64% of librarians saw an increase, but the average was under 8%; 8% lost money, to the average of 8.5%; about a quarter had the same budget.

Electronic resources show much different results. Most librarians (78%) had increasing budgets in this area, with an aver-

age increase over 13%, while only 3% lost money. The average loss was 3%. While over a quarter of librarians had the same books or serials budget, less than a fifth had stagnant electronics budgets.

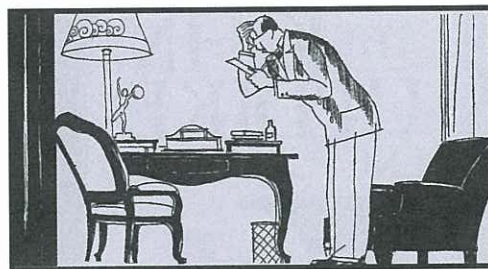
The average breakdown of budgets was overwhelmingly in favor of paper still—29% went to books and 49% to journals, for a combined 78% of the overall budget. e-serials and electronic resources each account for 6%, while CD-ROMs don't even account for 1%. That leaves nearly 9% of the budget, which goes mainly to A/V equipment such as DVDs, music CDs, and videos, as well as to preservation of existing material. Some of this remaining 9% also goes to electronic databases and ILL fees.

To stretch the budget, 25% of librarians have switched to paperback-only approval plans—only 66% have approval plans—and 27% have switched to paperback firm orders. 53% have had to cancel print journal subscriptions, which raises the question of archiving. Librarians are fairly reluctant to rely on other libraries—only 8%. About 20% maintain e-journals in whatever format is available and 20% maintain paper archives. Others rely on other campuses within their institution, microfiche/film, or other libraries within their consortia. Some librarians report that they cross their fingers or that they "haven't faced reality yet."

Personnel and Staffing

Everybody worries about job security. 20% of libraries have been downsized in the past two years—a ray of hope is that this is down from last year's 28%. Only 7% have downsized their professional staff, and 14% have downsized their paraprofessional staff. The most common way to downsize has been to merge various aspects of their Serials departments into their Acquisitions and Cataloging departments. Some librarians also report losing reference positions in favor of IT positions. When asked whether the downsizing has been positive or negative, most librarians said that it's too soon to tell and that they're too busy trying to keep up to be demoralized, although several did say the results were negative.

When asked how they responded to the increased workload with the rise of electronic resources and reduction in staff, an overwhelming 97% said "we just absorb the workload and try to muddle through." Responses included "Going crazy!," "Seat of our pants," and "Lots of frustration." Some libraries have been compensated by employing more interns, some have compensated by



working more hours or reducing operating hours, and some have compensated by outsourcing. Few are willing to cut back to the bare essentials or to send users away in order to cope with the increased demand. 20% resort to training the end-users as a way to cope.

50% report that they outsource approval plans, and only 66% have approval plans. A quarter outsource cataloging, and 8% outsource acquisitions. Other areas which are outsourced include preservation and the processing and checking in of serials.

Keeping staff up-to-date is a major concern. 88% do this with in-house training, and 54% do it with continuing education programs. Funding travel is also a popular way to get training, at 73%. Satellite transmissions are employed by 34% of libraries, and credit courses by 25%. One-on-one training and workshops are common alternatives.

ILL and Distance Education

Most libraries (88%) have Web pages, and for many the Web is the conduit of choice for distance education, which 58% participate in. Some distance education programs are limited to a specific urban area, some are throughout a state or region, and some are available throughout the world. In most of these programs, the library's Website provides ILL/document delivery, databases, catalogs, and reference guides. Despite the prevalence of library Websites and the roles of libraries in distance education, only 15% have merged with their institute's computer center.

59% of librarians use commercial document delivery for their ILL needs, and allocate nearly 4% of their budget, \$30,350, to ILL costs. 64% report very effective ILL programs, 12% report that they work, and 3% say that they don't work well. That leaves 20% who didn't respond to the effectiveness of their ILL. 59% use ILL as a determining factor in purchasing. Oddly enough, one librarian who was not impressed with the effectiveness of ILL said that ILL was a major factor in purchasing.

Concerns and Issues

Communication is always important, so how are librarians communicating? When it comes to field publications, many librarians read the same journals. *Against the*

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Grain is the most popular (100%) and *Library Journal* is also popular (78%). Other common journals among librarians include: *C&RL*, *Choice*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Information Technology in Libraries*, *Wired*, and *American Libraries*.

Librarians share many concerns regarding the future. Topping the list of concerns was the skyrocketing cost of journals, mergers and the gradual extinction of small vendors and publishers, shrinking or stagnant budgets, recruiting young blood, archiving, and copyright laws. Librarians also expressed concern with the changing role of the library and the relationship between information and knowledge. With easy access to vast volumes of information via the World Wide Web, librarians are concerned that end-users are bypassing their friendly neighborhood librarian. The con-

cern is that librarians have the training to sift through these vast volumes to find the grains of truth, but formats are changing so rapidly that it's hard for librarians to keep up, and end-users seem—at least through librarians' eyes—more willing to mass-produce using dubious information than to hand-craft using carefully gathered and analyzed knowledge.

And the Winners are—

As promised, two winners were selected at random from the librarians who sent in their surveys. The winners are **Juliette Arnheim** (Princeton University) <jarnheim@princeton.edu> and **Caroline Long** (George Washington University) <cclong@gwu.edu>. They will both receive a free subscription to *ATG* and a free **Charleston Conference 2001** registration. Congratulations, y'all! Thanks to all of you who sent in your surveys, and if you didn't win, there's always next year. 🍀

Rumors from page 40

brarian, Yale University), **Derk Haank** (CEO, Elsevier Science), **Frank Gannon** (Executive Director, European Molecular Biology Organization), **Jo McEntyre** and **David J. Lipman** (National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA) and many, many others.

Heard from the retired **Dora Biblarz** <biblarz@asu.edu> and she says that that *Against the Grain* is the ONLY library publication which she thoroughly reads and enjoys (even if she doesn't have an article in it!). Not bad even if I do say so myself!

Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA) has launched its new **BiblioAlerts.com** service www.biblioalerts.com allowing individual researchers to acquire scientific and technical reports—all at a fraction of the cost required for researching massive amounts of scientific data. Users can choose from more than 1,500

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written that you would like to send us? Now is the time to send it to us or tell us what you want to see in *Against the Grain*. Okay? Okay.

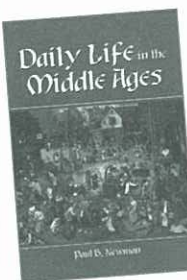
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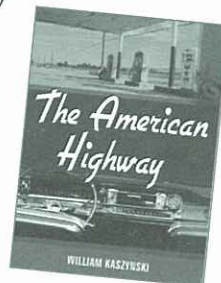
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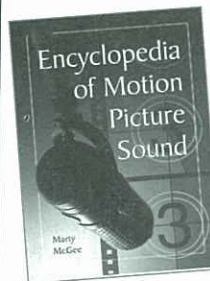
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